

## **Draft speech**

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### **Asian Development Bank Transport Forum 2010**

Vice President Schaefer-Preuss, thank you. And thank you for the invitation to speak about road safety at this important meeting today.

As you probably know, I am an actress. Some of you may know me from my role in the James Bond series. Others may recognise me as the woman who 'ran across the rooftops' in the movie 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon'.

But of all the roles I've played nothing has been as important, and fulfilling, as the work I've done on behalf of the Make Roads Safe campaign, to improve road safety.

And of all the world dominating villains I've defeated with cool martial arts moves in the movies, none has been as cruel or deadly as this epidemic on our roads. This is a killer that robs families of their children, that separates lovers forever, that destroys lives in a sudden moment of violence. James Bond and all the superheroes of Hollywood can't defeat this menace. No, this one is down to you. You will have to be the heroes in this story.

I travel all over the world for my movies and for the Make Roads Safe campaign. But Asia is my home, and I care passionately that we do all we can here, in this region, to make our roads safe. So I am delighted to have this chance today to speak to representatives of so many governments and organisations, and to engage with your vitally important institution – the Asian Development Bank.

The theme of your transport forum is 'changing course'. And more than any other issue, it is road safety where change is desperately needed. Because we have a choice: will we continue to travel along the old road, watching as the casualties and the grief and the costs mount year by year? Or will we take a new direction, and deliver the policies and the road safety vaccines that we know can make the difference?

I am not a road safety expert, I'm an actress. I know more about camera angles than about crumple zones. But over the past three years for the Make Roads Safe campaign and the FIA Foundation I have travelled in every continent. I have met Presidents, transport ministers, road engineers, health workers, community organisers and many, many families who have suffered loss. From what I have witnessed, it is all too clear that transport policies are failing people. This failure is demonstrated in so many ways:

- In the Delhi trauma unit where 70 per cent of the beds are filled with road traffic victims;
- In the desperation etched on the faces of parents watching over their injured children in a Hanoi hospital;
- In the smart new multi-lane highway which has far too few crossing points for the community it cuts in half.
- In the endless grief of a mother whose child's young life, so full of hope and promise, has been extinguished just because she wasn't wearing a helmet;

So we must change direction. And I am pleased to say the signposts are pointing to a more promising future. Last November I was delighted to attend the first ever Global Ministerial Conference in Moscow, where President Medvedev of Russia and transport ministers from more than 80 countries committed to act on road traffic injuries. And in March this year I had the great honour to represent my own country – Malaysia – in the United Nations General Assembly in New York as the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety was proclaimed. One hundred governments co-sponsored the Resolution. We are now seeing real momentum.

But the challenge we face is to turn this momentum into action that improves – and, yes, saves – people's lives. And in meeting this challenge the role of the Asian Development Bank is so crucially important.

Our Make Roads Safe campaign has consistently called on the multilateral development banks to make road safety a greater priority, to use your vast lending capacity as a force for good.

Because for too long roads have been planned and built with one vital element forgotten: the people they should be designed to serve.

For too long billions of dollars have been invested in road programs by institutions that have almost zero road safety expertise within their staff.

For too long road safety has been an afterthought: just one or two per cent of a project budget, always vulnerable to cost savings adjustment.

But we can learn from the past, and create something better. The joint statement on road safety published by the World Bank, the ADB and the other leading banks last November was a powerful and unequivocal pledge to at last make road safety a priority.

And with your Sustainable Transport Initiative, the ADB is already translating that pledge into policy. I am sure we will soon see this resulting in real action that saves lives.

Your bank was built with the finest motives: to serve the poorest nations and communities, to aid development and foster international cooperation. Now it is time to direct those founding principles to solving this catastrophe of the modern world, this needless suffering of thousands of people on our roads.

We all know that the Asia-Pacific region has huge road injury problems. But we also have the potential within Asia to solve this crisis. The global car manufacturing giants of the future will be Asian, and they must be encouraged to produce safe and green cars for the future.

We have innovative Asian road safety solutions like the Global Helmet Vaccine Initiative, which builds on successful helmet campaigns in Vietnam. I am delighted that the Automobile Association of the Philippines and the Education Ministry here in Manila will host a helmet vaccine event this afternoon.

We have the International Road Assessment Programme, which is working in many countries in this region – Australia, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Vietnam and here in the Philippines. iRAP is transforming the way we understand safe road design, and setting out very clearly the economic and social benefits of investing in safety.

We have so many governments, represented here today, who want to take road safety seriously and are making the commitment to balance economic progress with social sustainability.

And last, but certainly not least, we have the Asian Development Bank, ready to take on its role as a leader in road safety for the UN Decade of Action.

In a few moments we will show a short film which says more about what is at stake and why we have to act. We do face a challenge, but I am optimistic about the future. I know that you will be heroes for road safety, and that together we can make the Decade of Action a reality.

Thank you.